

THE BATTALION
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EDITORIAL
DÉJÀ VU

The recent behavior of the College Republicans is unacceptable.

In what is becoming habitual behavior, the Texas A&M College Republicans have once again tarnished the reputation of their organization and the entire University through their arrogance and irresponsible actions.

Last year, in an attempt to protest affirmative action, members posted tasteless and offensive fliers around campus that belittled minorities.

However, that incident pales in comparison to the current predicament the College Republicans are in.

Now it appears they have challenged University regulations by sending out a fund-raising letter to Texas A&M alumni that contained blatantly erroneous information. In doing so, they have also pointlessly discredited the administration and Texas A&M University.

The content of the letter is outrageous, as it contains wrong information, improper solicitation for funds and unsupported allegations.

In the letter, Lydia Percival, former College Republicans president, charges that the proposed multiculturalism requirement passed by the "liberal" Faculty Senate "requires students to take politically correct classes about the abuses of the white male in America ... forcing all students to take a women's studies class or a class on African-American history."

In reality, the proposal has not yet been signed, and there are nearly 200 classes from which to choose, including sociohorticulture and the geography of Britain.

In addition, Percival makes allegations that "President Bowen got his job by promising to sign this multiculturalism bill, and the left-wing professors who hired him are getting restless because he is dragging his feet."

The letter contains other outlandish statements regarding free speech, homosexuality in the curriculum and more bizarre assertions about proposed curriculum changes.

Finally, the solicitation of donations to "protect Texas A&M" showed poor taste. In addition, the guidelines listed in the Policies and Procedures Manual for Recognized Student Organizations prohibits mass mail-outs designed specifically to solicit funds.

By sending a mass mail-out to raise money, and by grossly misrepresenting the actions of the University administration, it appears the College

Republicans have broken important rules regarding student organizations.

More importantly, however, they have disgraced this University.

By grossly misrepresenting the environment of Texas A&M, the College Republicans are tarnishing the image of the University.

Attacking the policies of Texas A&M and its administration is perfectly acceptable and sometimes should be encouraged, but deliberately and deceitfully belittling the University as a whole is deplorable and should not be tolerated.

The College Republicans should be ashamed of their actions. While it is questionable whether they violated any University regulations, they did violate a more important law — the Aggie Code of Honor.

This code exists for the benefit of the students; it is what keeps the integrity and standards of Aggies among the highest in the nation.

The actions of the College Republicans not only hurts Texas A&M, but more importantly, they discredit everything Aggies stand for — truth, honor and pride.

Through their fundraising letter, the College Republicans have sent the message to former students that none of those qualities exist at Texas A&M anymore.

Fortunately, Dr. Bowen responded quickly and graciously to irate recipients of the letter.

He and the Faculty Senate have refuted with evidence all of the allegations made in Percival's letter.

The College Republicans have failed to substantiate any of their allegations.

Although they have requested 30 more days to substantiate their claims, the facts provided by the administration leave little room for debate.

In its current state, the College Republicans organization appears incapable of controlling itself.

Although it is important for Texas A&M to have groups representing the entire political spectrum, it is doubtful that the organization can function responsibly in its present form.

The students of this University should strongly reconsider the viability of the College Republicans.

This pattern of extreme, careless and insulting behavior should no longer be tolerated.

Justice obscured by petty lawsuits

Everyone knows the story by now. A hard-working American citizen needs a cup of coffee and pulls into the local McDonalds.

The friendly worker serves up a cup of fresh coffee, and the citizen pulls happily away from the drive-thru. Suddenly, the car hits a bump in the road. The coffee spills. The citizen is scalded by the evil McDonalds coffee.

In keeping with modern American tradition, the citizen sues McDonalds for a jillion dollars, wins and purchases Columbia.

As a destitute college student, the story reminds me of an incident in my life.

I remember it like it was yesterday. A group my close friends decided to celebrate a recent success with a trip to a burger joint in beautiful South Bryan.

As I stood in line pondering what I would purchase, a certain menu item caught my watchful eye.

"The Death Burger" it was called, and I felt the tug of a challenge.

What could this burger do to my youthful insides that campus dining hadn't already done? I quickly accepted the challenge, and ordered the burger and a beer.

As I eyed the monster, I wondered what fate awaited me. I looked carefully at the burger's bun.

No warning signs or disclaimers. No age limits or pictures of a skull and crossbones.

I then examined the toppings. I found no signs of the evil that lurked within. I observed the patty itself. It seemed like a perfectly normal piece of greasy American beef. The meat, like the rest of the conception, had no written disclaimers.

Little did I realize that on that faithful autumn day, I was staring naively into the



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face of The Beast.

I took the first bite of hell. As my friends watched, a bright blue flame shot out of my mouth.

Without thinking, I reached for the nearest liquid substance. I never took CHEM 101, so I didn't know that Tecate beer and death

burgers cause a lethal chemical reaction. The inferno in my mouth would've made Dante cringe.

As I begged for a quick death, my friends offered their assistance by laughing uncontrollably at me.

At the time, I thought my only recourse was Maalox and a gallon of ice water. As a dutiful American citizen, I realize now that I should have sued the burger joint, the beer company and the janitor who cleans the floor every night.

I realize it sounds like a silly proposition, but with the current trend of legalistic larceny, suing a company for selling a spicy burger would be entirely acceptable.

The legal system in our country is in need of massive repair. Civil litigation and frivolous lawsuits abound, while unchecked judges tear the foundation of our Constitution apart. Our republican system has become a government by judicial decree.

Lino Graglia, a professor of constitutional law at the University of Texas, writes that "Justices have treated it (the 14th Amendment) as an empty vessel into which they could pour any meaning" and goes on to observe that "(the Justices have) converted a system of government by the people primarily on a local basis into a system of government by judges from Washington, D.C."

I have a strong tendency to disagree with Mr. Graglia's analysis.

Our system of laws is being corrupted by a much more powerful force — the people. Lawyers don't instigate lawsuits unless clients desire such lawsuits. While some lawyers actively pursue cases, most act on the wishes of their clients.

The problem lies not with the law, but with the people who use the law. The problem is solvable, but only through complete overhaul of the present system.

Penalties for frivolous lawsuits are a good start. Making the losing side pay the court fees of the winning side is another good option. Perhaps the best option, however, is the most difficult to implement.

What price would you put on the life of your parents? Quite simply, no amount of money is adequate. However, the increasing awards given to plaintiffs in personal injury and wrongful death suits contradict this notion. We must establish some sort of cap on punitive damages.

For example, suppose I actually decided to sue the burger joint for "personal injury, humiliation and gastric distress."

The judge could penalize me for being a stupid, spineless wimp and throw the case out of court.

If the judge decides my case has merit, and a jury decides I'm just some jerk wasting their time, they could make me pay for the defendant's court cost. And, if I decide my scalded tongue is worth \$5 million, the punitive cap could ensure that my tongue doesn't get valued at anything more than a couple of dollars.

The pursuit of justice is ostensibly a noble calling. Unfortunately, it has become an opportunity for people to make money in dubious cases.

Brian Beckcom is a senior computer science major



Face value doesn't depict total truth

People often look at one characteristic and derive an entire personality

During high school, I participated in the Minnesota All-State Orchestra for several summers.

This gave me plenty of opportunities to watch the musically gifted and talented from a seat near the back of the rehearsal hall.

My best friend and I were happy to giggle while others competed for top honors. From our places we had a good view and plenty of time to observe.

One thing I kept noticing was that the concert master or mistress, or the musical section leaders, got special treatment, and not just from the conductor. From the rest of the orchestra, most of the time.

At social functions or meal-times, dances or discussions, the best musicians were treated by everyone else as the Most Valuable Human Beings.

My best friend and I, who incidentally did not fall into the category of brilliant violinists, were forced to hobnob with each other. No one else would have us.

Since we were merely competent musicians, not stars, people seemed to treat us as though we were the clean-up crew. Perhaps I exaggerate — I'm sure we had one or two friends, but they were probably the musicians who sat



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behind us. I have seen this multiple times: in any organization or activity, people tend to have their

worth judged by their proficiency in that particular activity.

In other words, we stereotype and project during the process known as impression formation.

In other words, we tend to think that people are good people just because they are good at something.

Let's say you write for a magazine. If you are bad at writing and editing, people at the magazine may assume that you are bad at other things, like school or bowling. Or telling jokes.

Or, pretend that you join an intramural team but you are a poor athlete. Don't be surprised if you leave by yourself while the rest of the team goes to DQ to celebrate after the game. People probably don't want to hear your jokes after you missed all of your free throws.

Imagine that you are a fifth-year senior taking introductory biology lab. You are struggling to pass, let alone to understand the experiments you are expected to perform.

It's doubtful that people from the lab are going to be calling you up on the weekend. In their eyes, your lack of smarts in the lab could translate into a lack of worth. And your jokes just won't cut it.

These scenarios may or may not have been lifted straight from my life, but that's not important. (At least one of them isn't exactly true.)

The point is that my observations of this phenomena span nearly a decade. I think I know what I'm talking about here. And just in case, the 1994 Academic Review backs me up.

See, *Impression Formation*: "There is a tendency for people to infer a whole personality from the perceived presence of only one trait. For example, knowing someone is intelligent leads most people to expect that the person is clever, active and reliable," it reports.

Sometimes we assume people who are attractive are intelligent. Or, we think that being able to throw a football means that you know something about, well, about anything.

You may or may not know something, but your passing arm has nothing to do with it.

Like that actor who played a wise attorney on *L.A. Law*. Now he advertises for some medicine. Because he looks smart and played a kindly patriarchal type,

we believe that he knows something about pharmacology.

Doesn't make a lot of sense when you break it down, but that doesn't stop us from believing.

(Personally I buy it because that actor looks just like my dad.)

We tend to think people are good people just because they are talented.

Here in Aggieland, we are not immune from this impression formation syndrome. In fact, we might be more guilty than other people. Around these parts, people think that if you aren't a good Ag, you probably aren't a good person.

If you don't know how to whoop and gig'em and rebuild Bonfire with one hand behind your back, 'good' Ags might make all these other assumptions about you, and you are helpless to refute them.

Now, me, I'm a good Ag — I have nothing to worry about, but those people who aren't don't deserve contempt. I just need a little help with biology.

We all have our weaknesses and strengths; let's just make sure we don't judge people before we know a little about both.

Erin Hill is a graduate pursuing a teaching certificate



MAIL CALL

Recent attacks on Greeks ridiculous

I am writing in regards to the Sept. 12 The Battalion article about the flag being disrespected by fraternities.

The Greeks were accused of not loving Americans, Texans or even Aggies.

To say that we are not patriotic is ridiculous.

I am an active member of the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity. Two of the members in my chapter spent four years in the Corps of Cadets.

Moreover, one of my other

brothers left school to fulfill his duty in the Marine Corps to give aid in Somalia.

Finally, two more active members are serving their country by joining the military. We are Aggies too.

I thought Aggies looked out for other Aggies and that there is a special bond here at A&M.

There is no reason to say that another Aggie, or his or her group, "tarnishes the University's reputation and shames the name 'Texas Aggie.'"

David Sanders
Class of '96